

Who's riding so late through night, so wild?
It is the father who's holding his child;
He's tucked the boy secure in his arm,
He holds him tight and keeps him warm.

My son, why hide you your face in fear?"
See you not, father, the Erl King near?
The Erl King in his crown and train?"
My son, 'tis but a foggy strain."

Sweet lovely child, come, go with me!
What wonderful games I'll play with thee;
Flowers, most colorful, yours to behold.
My mother for you has garments of gold."

My father, my father, and can you not hear
What Erl King is promising into my ear?"
Be calm, stay calm, o child of mine;
The wind through dried leaves is rustling so fine."

Wouldst thou, fine lad, go forth with me?
My daughters should royally wait upon thee;
My daughters conduct each night their song fest
To swing and to dance and to sing thee to rest."

My Father, my father, and can you not see
Erl King's daughters, there by the tree?"
My son, my son, I see it clear;
The ancient willows so grey do appear."

I love thee, I'm aroused by thy beautiful form;
And be thou not willing, I'll take thee by storm."
My father, my father, he's clutching my arm!
Erl King has done me a painful harm!"

The father shudders and onward presses;
The gasping child in his arms he caresses;
He reaches the courtyard, and barely inside,
He holds in his arms the child who has died.